



Staff Report

CONSIDERATION OF A RESOLUTION ADOPTING A BAN ON THE USE OF DISPOSABLE PLASTIC WATER BOTTLES AT PUBLIC MEETINGS IN CITY HALL

Honorable Mayor and Council Members:

Summary

At the April 8 City Council meeting, Council Member Bill Dickenson presented an “Item # 9” on the Council agenda titled “discussion regarding elimination of the use of plastic water bottles at City Hall public meetings.” The City Council directed staff to prepare a staff report articulating the policy issues surrounding eliminating disposable bottled water at City Hall public meetings. This ban would only apply to public meetings in City Hall.

Background

On the Peninsula

San Francisco recently announced City Departments will no longer be allowed to purchase bottled water, even for water coolers. The City claims this ban will save tax payer money and combat global warming. The Mayor proclaimed Hetch Hetchy water the best in the world and likely better water quality than what is in most water bottles. The San Francisco pronouncement claimed more than 40 million gallons of oil are required to produce bottles for convenience bottled water. The City claimed in a press release that more than a billion disposed bottles end up in the state's landfills each year. San Francisco's ban takes effect in July.

In the State of California

The **City of Santa Barbara** banned plastic water bottles in April before San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom made his public pronouncement. As part of Santa Barbara's broader sustainability campaign, no more plastic bottled water will be purchased for city meetings or events. Instead, iced tap water will be served out of carafes and poured into biodegradable containers. Santa Barbara's water ban was declared in April, and implementation began last month. The policy prohibits the expenditure of city funds on bottled water.

In the U.S. and the World

New York State's legislature is considering a bill that would prevent the state government from purchasing individual plastic water bottles. New York would be the first state to take that step, though several California cities have already done so.

Madison Wisconsin's Commission on the Environment is expected to begin discussing the bans of water bottles soon after members voted unanimously at the end of last year to put them on upcoming agendas.

Salt Lake's Mayor Rocky Anderson has implemented a new plan to switch from disposable plastic water bottles to refillable bottles for all city fire fighters. "Bottled water makes no sense, it's the greatest marketing scam of all time," says Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson. Mayor Anderson is on a mission to save the environment from plastic water bottles. To set an example, he's asked city employees to drink tap water with refillable bottles and glasses - and that includes fire fighters.

In the **U.S. House of Representatives**, Rep Maralyn Chase (D-Shoreline Washington) has introduced a bill, 2008 house bill 2422) that would prohibit the sale of petroleum-based water bottles, one liter in size or smaller, by any retailer, wholesaler or vending machine provider. This bill would take effect January 1, 2010. The bill was referred to the house select committee on Environmental Health.

Canada's "Health Canada" is the first world health organization to call BPA (Biphenol A) a dangerous chemical. The U.S. Government's National Toxicology program says there is some concern with this chemical. WalMart Canada has removed from its shelves products containing BPA. Trace amounts are used in the manufacture of convenience water bottles, dental sealants, baby bottles, liners of food cans, etc. U.S. Senator Charles Shumer plans to introduce a bill in the Senate banning products using BPA for children's products and food packaging containers. An expert panel of U.S. researchers attending the National Institute of Health's Conference pronounced more research on BPA is needed.

Discussion

It is staffs understanding this proposed ban would only apply to public meetings in City Hall. Should meeting attendees need to drink water, they are free to bring their own reusable bottles containing water. The City will not provide water to meeting attendees after Council adoption of the proposed water bottle ban. This proposed ban would **not** apply to:

- 1) City Hall private offices and cubicles
- 2) City field operations

The proposed City policy is only applicable to public meetings at City Hall. It does **not** apply to the private Belmont economy.

Operationally, a water bottle ban would be very difficult to incorporate for field operations. Therefore, if the Council majority wishes to support a policy banning water bottles, staff recommends certain field operational exemptions to this proposed water bottle ban. They are:

- a) City Operational Departments such as Police, Fire, Parks & Recreation and Public Works – There are several operational issues to consider. We have staff in the field that need water on a daily basis and also will need water delivered to them in an emergency. In certain circumstances, plastic bottles provide an easy way to do it. We store extra plastic water bottles in the public safety command vehicles and the patrol cars for use in the field. We currently do not have any canteens or at least most people do not. The other issue is bottled water for the emergency operations Center (EOC) to be stored for emergencies. We do have a few of the big 5-gallon water bottles providing they all remain standing in an earth quake
- b) General Office – Office water coolers of three gallons or more may be needed to fill reusable containers if bottled water is not available.

General Plan/Vision Statement

The City's stated goal is to reduce its carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions. A Green Advisory Committee has been created to research and recommend environmental policy actions to accomplish the goal. Eliminating waste and reduction of non-biodegradable waste, like plastic water bottles going into the County landfill is State law and good public policy.

Use of disposable bottled water does result in some waste of a scarce resource, as some partially used containers are trashed. This bottled water ban will reduce water waste and is a small step in the direction of the stated goal.

Fiscal Impact

The ban of disposable plastic water bottles for public meetings in City Hall will result in minor cost savings to the City.

Public Contact

This matter was discussed at the April 8th City Council meeting, televised on local cable television. The item was publicly posted as part of the City Council agenda. An article did appear in the local newspaper

Recommendation

Consider adoption of the attached resolution banning disposable plastic water bottles of less than three gallons from public meetings at City Hall.

Alternatives

1. Take no action
2. Adopt a policy resolution directing a ban on disposable plastic water bottles
3. Provide staff direction to further research and refine the proposal

Attachments

- A. Resolution of the City of Belmont

Respectfully submitted,

Jack R. Crist
City Manager

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RESOLUTION NO. _____

**RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BELMONT
ADOPTING A BAN ON THE USE OF DISPOSABLE PLASTIC WATER BOTTLES AT
PUBLIC MEETINGS IN CITY HALL**

Whereas the City of Belmont is a regional leader in promoting environmentally sensitive public policy; and

Whereas State of California Senate Bill 32 mandates a reduction in greenhouse gas carbon footprint; and

Whereas the City of Belmont has recently created a Green Advisory Committee to research “green” policies and make recommendations to the City Council; and

Whereas plastic water bottles are not biodegradable, making compliance with State solid waste law difficult and waste the scarce resource of water; and

Whereas the City Council wishes to set a positive example to the community on environmental matters;

Now Therefore be it Resolved by the City Council of the City of Belmont, California that it is the public policy of the City of Belmont that disposable plastic water bottles of less than three gallons shall not be allowed at City Hall public meetings .

* * * * *

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly and regularly passed and adopted by the City Council of the City of Belmont at a regular meeting thereof held on May 13, 2008, by the following vote:

AYES, COUNCILMEMBERS: _____

NOES, COUNCILMEMBERS: _____

ABSTAIN, COUNCILMEMBERS: _____

ABSENT, COUNCILMEMBERS: _____

CLERK of the City of Belmont

APPROVED:

MAYOR of the City of Belmont